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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Saturday, July 10, 1937
(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Our Department-of-Agriculture correspondent in Washington, D. C. writes this week about a conversation she had recently with Dr. Hazel Munsell of the Bureau of Home Economics about new findings in foods and nutrition.

"Probably most housewives today," begins the letter--"Probably most housewives busy with the job of getting three square meals a day for the family don't spend much time thinking about the women who are working at the same job in a different way--the home economists in foods-and-nutrition laboratories at colleges and State experiment stations and Government bureaus and other research centers. But most housewives are using the facts that these scientists have discovered--using them whenever they feed the baby cod liver oil and orange juice, or cook vegetables rapidly in a small amount of water, or make sure the market-list includes plenty of milk, fruit and green leafy vegetables. Whether you think about it or not, the research workers have given our generation the advantage over all other generations of women in the job of feeding the family.

"All this came to my mind after a talk with Dr. Hazel Munsell of the Bureau of Home Economics about what the nutritionists have discovered so far, and what they will probably learn in the near future. Dr. Munsell thinks that housewives of the next generation will have it all over us because such research is continuing and increasing, and new facts are coming out of the laboratories every day. So tomorrow people will know a good deal more about what food materials the body needs to make it grow and keep it healthy, and a good deal more about the foods that supply these materials.

"Already food tests have given much information on the nutritive value of our common foods, Dr. Munsell said. So we know now, for example, how much calcium, phosphorus, iron, protein, carbohydrate, fat and the different vitamins many foods yield. Of course, foods contain many other minerals, but calcium and iron are the ones most apt to be low in American diets, Dr. Munsell said. Food tests show that milk in all its forms and cheese are probably the best sources of calcium among our common foods and that many greens are rich in calcium, too. As for iron, a great variety of foods have passed high in iron tests--all lean meats, especially the meat organs like liver and kidneys; egg yolk, too; green leafy vegetables; sirups like cane sirup, sorghum sirup and molasses; dried fruits; nut; oysters and shrimps; and so on.

"But Dr. Munsell tells me that these facts about nutritive value, helpful as they are, appear to be just the beginning of the story. Lately the scientists find that different samples of the same kind of food are very different in the amounts of calcium, say, or iron, or vitamins that they contain. This is an important finding, especially in the case of vegetables because their chief value in the diet is the minerals and vitamins they contain. So the scientists

have been searching for the cause of these differences. Just lately they have come to realize that the soil a vegetable is grown in may make a great difference in the iron or calcium content. The variety of the vegetable may make a difference, too--especially in vitamin content. At the Bureau of Home Economics recently they tested different varieties of oranges and tomatoes and found that some were very rich in vitamin C while others were not so rich. Vitamin tests also have shown that the way a vegetable is grown may make a difference in vitamin content, and that how long a vegetable or fruit is stored after picking and at what temperature it is kept affect its vitamins. Vegetables that stand for some time out of cold storage lose a good deal of vitamin C. And those that are dried lose their original supply of vitamins A and B and C. Then, certain ways of cooking cause more loss of vitamins than others.

"Dr. Munsell tells me that this matter of cooking to save food value as well as for attractive appearance and fine flavor has had a good deal of attention in the laboratory. Some time ago scientists learned that some vitamins and minerals are soluble in water, and that when vegetables are boiled, these soluble substances dissolve into the cooking water and are often lost. This is why nutritionists suggest that you use as little water as possible in cooking vegetables and that you cook them as short a time as possible. They also suggest that you serve what liquid is left on the vegetable. Fortunately, quick cooking is also the best way to save color and flavor. Then, heat affects vitamins in food, especially vitamin C and vitamin B. Vitamin C is so easily destroyed by heat that no cooked foods except tomatoes are a dependable source of this vitamin. But uncooked foods such as citrus fruit and raw cabbage will supply it. As for vitamin B, it, too, is destroyed by heat, especially if the foods that contain it are heated when they are dry.

"Scientists are continuing these studies of the causes of different food values in the same kind of food. And they are also searching for more information about the quantities of minerals and vitamins that the human body needs at different states of health and activity. Right now at the Bureau of Home Economics they are trying to find out how much vitamin A the body needs at different ages and weights. The question of weight came into the picture when recent animal nutrition-studies showed that the amount of vitamin A cows need depends on their weight.

"This conversation set me to thinking how foods-and-nutrition research in the near future may help not only the housewife as she plans meals and buys food, cooks and cans, but also the farmer as he decides on crops to plant and soils to plant them in, and all those who are shipping, handling or dealing in foods."

That concludes this week's letter from our Department of Agriculture correspondent in Washington, D. C.

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